



THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

November 1, 1965

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Mr. Joseph Becker, Member

Subject: American Standard Code for Information Interchange
(ASCII)

By a joint memorandum, copy attached, we are requesting the views of vendors on the economic impact of the attached policy statement which proposes the adoption of the American Standard Code for Information Interchange as a Federal Standard.

In addition to the views of the vendors, we need to have an expression of the views of using Departments of the Federal Government. Your cooperation in providing an expression of your Department views, not later than November 19, 1965, will be appreciated. If further information is needed, inquiries may be directed to Mr. L. L. Griffin, Office for the Coordination and Development of ADP Standards, (Code 154 ext. 7742) Center for Computer Sciences and Technology, National Bureau of Standards, or Mr. Marvin Burris, Data Processing Coordination Staff, (Code 183 ext. 5863) General Services Administration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John T. Connor".

Secretary of Commerce

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James M. [unclear]".

Acting Administrator of General
Services

Enclosures - 2



THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

November 1, 1965

Subject: American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII)

The Bureau of the Budget has asked the Department of Commerce and the General Services Administration for a recommendation on whether the American Standard Code for Information Interchange should be adopted as a Federal Standard.

Before we make such a recommendation we would like to know the economic impact of such action upon suppliers of computers and information processing equipment including communications and the earliest feasible time at which each supplier could provide the Federal Government with equipment responsive to the proposed standard. The desirability of maximum feasible compatibility among Federal agencies in the input-output characteristics of the equipment which they use for automatic data processing was emphasized in the Bureau of the Budget's Report to the President on the Management of Automatic Data Processing in the Federal Government.

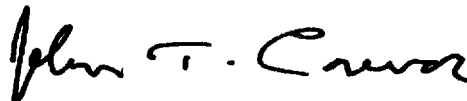
As you know, President Johnson approved this report and forwarded it to Congress on March 2, 1965. It is presently available in Senate Document 15, printed at the request of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, and we presume that copies of this document have been studied by members of your company.

As the Bureau of the Budget has said, "The attainment of greater compatibility among ADP systems is an essential element of the Government's program to achieve more effective and economical use of this equipment, and requires a coordinated and unified effort among all who have primary responsibilities in this regard."

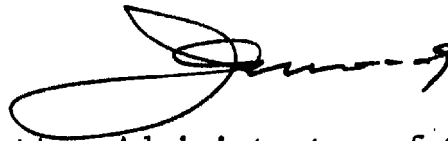
Page 2

Accordingly we will appreciate it if you will provide, no later than November 19, 1965, a written response to the undersigned commenting upon the economic impact of the attached proposed policy statement which has been recommended by the Standards Panel of the Bureau of the Budget's ADP Advisory Council. Your reply should also indicate the earliest date at which your firm can supply equipment responsive to the proposed policy (making ASCII a Federal Standard).

If further information is needed, inquiries may be directed to Mr. L. L. Griffin, Office for the Coordination and Development of ADP Standards, (Area Code 202, EM-2-4040 x 7742) Center for Computer Sciences and Technology, National Bureau of Standards, or Mr. Marvin Burris, Data Processing Coordination Staff, (Area Code 202, 343-5863) General Services Administration.



Secretary of Commerce



Acting Administrator of General Services

Enclosure

Proposal of the Standards Panel

The Standards Panel of the ADP Advisory Council, at its meeting on January 25, 1965, agreed to the following statement in connection with the adoption of the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) by the Federal Government and recommends that the statement be issued as a policy announcement.

1. Objective. The objective of the Federal Government is to achieve, through the adoption and implementation of appropriate information processing system standards, the highest practical degree of compatibility for the interchange of information in machine-processable form within and between information processing systems, including input-output equipment, source data automation equipment, other associated equipment and communication systems. Included in this objective is the maximum use of standard programming languages and a minimum need for reprocessing, reordering or conversion of information in interchange operations. This objective is not limited to interchange within the Federal Government but is to be extended, wherever practical, to interchange with other Governmental bodies, Government contractors and the public at large.

2. Policy. In support of this objective, it is the policy of the Federal Government to acquire and use systems and equipment which utilize the ASCII and the associated principal media standards (i.e., magnetic tape, punched tape and cards) for character input-output and transmission operations. Future planning for the development and procurement of general purpose electronic digital computer systems and associated hardware, including communication systems and source data automation equipment, should therefore be based on the use of the ASCII.

The following magnetic tape input-output practices will be considered consistent with the above policy:

a. Packing two numeric digits with a common parity bit in a single character frame for high performance magnetic tape file maintenance and similar local operations, provided non-numeric information is recorded in the prescribed ASCII mode.

b. The recording of information in binary word form when used in association with a binary mode of computer operation.

3. Implementation. In order to provide for the earliest practical implementation of this policy, the General Services Administration should include provision for the use of the ASCII in input-output operations as a specification in the FY 1967 Federal Supply Schedule term contracts for ADP equipment.

- 2 -

Prior to FY 1967, the cost of converting to and from ASCII for information interchange operations shall be taken into consideration by all Federal agencies in considering the selection of systems and equipment which do not utilize the ASCII and associated media standards for input-output purposes. The cost of converting to and from ASCII will be the responsibility of the organization obtaining the equipment utilizing a non-standard code.

4. Exceptions. In unusual cases where departments and agencies find it necessary to deviate from the stated policy, the Director of the National Bureau of Standards will be notified in writing as soon as the need for deviation becomes evident. Such notification should include a complete statement of the reasons why a deviation is being authorized, so that the problems being encountered can be resolved or given appropriate consideration in the future development or revision of information processing standards. A copy of the notification will be sent to the Director, Bureau of the Budget.

STATINTL

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